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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

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Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. The report is also submitted in response to Assembly resolution 72/133 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/14. The period covered by the report is 1 January to 31 December 2017.

The report provides an overview of efforts to improve humanitarian coordination and response as well as major humanitarian trends, challenges and measures taken regarding famine and the risk of famine, severe food insecurity, climate-related shocks, international humanitarian law and human rights law, forced displacement and financing and enhancing humanitarian action in the age of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the commitment to leave no one behind.

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I. Introduction

A. Overview of key trends

1. Humanitarian emergencies fuelled by conflicts and disasters associated with natural hazards once again drove humanitarian needs to a new high in 2017. At the end of the year, 135.7 million people needed humanitarian assistance, and humanitarian funding requirements peaked at $23.5 billion. [1] Humanitarian organizations responded by targeting a record number of 101.2 million people to receive aid, saving millions of lives, reducing suffering and promoting human dignity.

2. Food insecurity was a key cause of humanitarian requirements in 2017.[2] Some 124 million people in 51 countries were food insecure and required urgent humanitarian action to save lives, protect livelihoods and reduce acute hunger and malnutrition, an increase from 108 million in 2016.[3] Approximately 60 per cent of the world's hungry live in countries in conflict.

3. Following the Secretary-General's call to action, the international community came together to respond to and prevent famines in north-eastern Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, where nearly 15 million people received some form of life-saving assistance. Concerted efforts are still urgently needed to reverse rising food insecurity and end the scourge of famine.

4. Exacerbated by climate change, extreme weather events, flooding, drought and other disasters destroyed lives and livelihoods and contributed to displacement across the world. The number of people affected by disasters associated with natural hazards regularly exceeds 100 million annually, with an average of 25.3 million people displaced each year since 2008. All regions experienced devastating damage as a result of natural disasters in 2017, the warmest year on record in the absence of El Niño.

5. Conflict continues to be a major driver of humanitarian need, with conflicts increasing significantly in number and intensity over the past 10 years. The total number of people forcibly displaced by conflict and violence reached a record 65.6 million by the end of 2016, 40.3 million of whom were internally displaced. Internal displacement is increasingly protracted, with insufficient attention paid to durable solutions. The unprecedented number of displaced persons is the result of not only conflict, but also the brutality of the parties to hostilities.

6. Failure to protect civilians caught in conflict has resulted in incalculable suffering. Persistent disregard for international humanitarian law and international human rights law and impunity for violations deepen humanitarian crises. Women and children are at high risk. Warfare and sieges in urban areas, the starvation of civilians as a method of war and the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects are killing and maiming non-combatants and destroying vital civilian infrastructure. The deliberate denial of humanitarian access and bureaucratic impediments to the delivery of aid are prevalent in current conflicts.

7. The global humanitarian system is more effective than ever before and is saving lives and protecting people on a scale never previously achieved. Principled humanitarian action and international coordination of humanitarian aid in accordance

[1] Donors were more generous than ever, contributing $13.97 billion to inter-agency appeals.
[2] United Nations, *World Humanitarian Data and Trends 2017* (New York, 2017).
[3] Food Security Information Network, Global Report on Food Crises 2018.

with General Assembly resolution 46/182 remain critical. However, the humanitarian system remains under strain. The gap between needs and available funding grew during the year. Despite the increased generosity of donors, humanitarian response plans and appeals were only 58.9 per cent funded;[4] it is critical they be funded fully.

B. Opportunities ahead

8. The international community must accelerate efforts to prevent and end the humanitarian suffering seen in 2017 and to address the forces driving humanitarian crises. Ongoing efforts to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Samoa Pathway and the New Urban Agenda will help to mitigate humanitarian crises and reduce suffering over the medium to longer term.

9. The expected adoption in 2018 of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and a global compact on refugees presents major opportunities to enhance international responses to migration, large movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations. Furthermore, the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement presents an opportunity to consider strategies to ensure that internally displaced persons are adequately protected and assisted and to prevent and reduce the incidence of such displacement.

10. The proposals of the Secretary-General for repositioning the United Nations development system, the prevention agenda, peace and security reform, the United Nations system-wide strategy on gender parity, the new strategy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, and management reform complement and reinforce the work of the humanitarian system and will increase the coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations in the field.

11. The ongoing implementation of commitments and initiatives launched at the World Humanitarian Summit advance the vision of the Agenda for Humanity to end conflict, alleviate suffering and reduce risk and vulnerability. The reports of stakeholders, reflected in the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformations[5] (see A/71/353), show that change is under way.

II. Overview of humanitarian emergencies in 2017

A. Complex emergencies

12. The United Nations and its humanitarian partners responded to several crises during the year, including in several complex emergencies, where serious violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and international human rights law continued, impediments to access were prevalent, the protection of civilians remained a serious concern and sexual and gender-based violence remained a disturbing trend.

13. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at the end of the year 13.1 million people needed humanitarian assistance, more than twice the caseload in early 2017. More than 2.16 million people were displaced, bringing the number of internally

[4] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Financial Tracking Service.

[5] See also www.agendaforhumanity.org/about-us.

displaced people to 4.49 million, the highest number in any country in Africa. Some 630,500 Congolese remained refugees.

14. In Iraq, half of the almost 6 million people displaced since 2014 remained displaced in 2017. Almost 1 million people were displaced owing to the fighting in Mosul, with humanitarians providing emergency aid to some 1.7 million people. By the end of 2017, some 8.7 million people needed humanitarian assistance.

15. In Yemen, an estimated 20.7 million people, 55 per cent of them children, needed humanitarian assistance. More than 17 million people were food insecure, and nearly 7 million severely so. An unprecedented cholera outbreak resulted in more than 1 million suspected cases and some 2,200 deaths, and a diphtheria outbreak — the first since 1982 — began in August.

16. In the Syrian Arab Republic, at the end of the year some 13.1 million people needed humanitarian assistance. Safe, unimpeded and sustained access remained a significant challenge, with nearly 2.5 million people living in hard-to-reach areas and close to 420,000 living in besieged areas. The protection of civilians remained a grave concern, and indiscriminate attacks on populated areas and attacks on hospitals, health-care centres and medical personnel, education facilities and humanitarian workers and convoys remained widespread.

17. In Myanmar, the humanitarian situation deteriorated drastically during the year. More than 655,000 Rohingya had fled violence to seek refuge in Bangladesh by year's end. Combined with the estimated 212,000 Rohingya already in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, plus the affected host communities, 1.2 million people were targeted for humanitarian assistance in Bangladesh. Solutions to the crisis lie in Myanmar, and the Government needs urgently to create conditions for the voluntary, safe and sustainable return of refugees. In Myanmar, the humanitarian needs of Rohingya and other vulnerable groups in Rakhine State remained high, as did those of internally displaced people and communities affected by continued conflict in Kachin and Shan States.

18. In Somalia, acute humanitarian needs increased significantly owing to limited rain, large-scale displacement, lack of access to basic services and ongoing conflict. More than 1 million people were displaced, mainly from rural areas to urban centres, as a result of drought and conflict, and some 870,000 Somali refugees remained in the region and abroad. At the end of 2017, 6.2 million people required humanitarian and protection assistance.

19. In South Sudan, 7.6 million people were in need of assistance and protection and more than 6 million were severely food insecure at midyear. More than 668,000 people fled the country, bringing the number of South Sudanese refugees to greater than 2.4 million. Some 1.9 million people were internally displaced.

20. In the Sudan, large-scale protracted displacement continued to drive humanitarian and protection needs, especially in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, with some 4.8 million people in need of assistance. Aid reached some areas for the first time in several years. Continued violence and worsening food insecurity in South Sudan drove more than 196,000 refugees into the Sudan.

21. In the Sahel region, 30 million people faced food insecurity. Conflict left more than 10 million people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance in north-eastern Nigeria and parts of Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. At the end of 2017, some 2.3 million people remained displaced. In Mali, insecurity spread and 3.8 million people needed humanitarian assistance.

22. In Libya, by the end of the year, 1.1 million people needed humanitarian assistance and 217,000 remained internally displaced. More than 400,000 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers required humanitarian assistance. Abuse and exploitation, including in detention centres, remained a serious concern.

23. In the Central African Republic, the deterioration of the crisis caused an increase of almost 80 per cent in the number of internally displaced people, which exceeded 690,000. The number of refugees in neighbouring countries also increased by over 25 per cent, representing the highest recorded number of people forcibly displaced within and outside the Central African Republic since the height of the crisis.

24. In Burundi, the number of people in need of assistance increased from 3.0 million to 3.6 million, representing some 30 per cent of the country's population, including 1.9 million children. At the end of 2017, some 188,000 people were internally displaced, while some 400,000 had fled the country.

25. Conflict in Afghanistan resulted in the internal displacement of nearly 498,000 people and more than 10,400 casualties among civilians, almost of them half women and children. Some 81 per cent of those displaced were severely food insecure. Attacks directed against or indiscriminately harming civilians and civilian objects continued.

26. In Pakistan, humanitarian action centred on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the Malakand Division, where some 5 million people had been displaced since 2008. By September, the return of all but 43,549 families had been facilitated. Pakistan continued to host nearly 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees and an estimated 1 million undocumented Afghans.

27. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the protracted protection crisis continued. Two million Palestinians experienced or were at risk of physical violence, displacement and denial of access to livelihoods. Limited access to essential services such as water and health care affected the most vulnerable, especially in Gaza.

28. In Ukraine, some 3.8 million people needed humanitarian assistance. The shelling of urban areas and civilian infrastructure placed people on the "contact line" at risk. There are almost a million monthly crossings of the contact line, which has become increasingly contaminated by mines. Food insecurity doubled, with 1.2 million people considered moderately or severely food insecure.

29. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea remained entrenched in a humanitarian crisis. Some 10.5 million people, 41 per cent of the population, were undernourished. The ability of humanitarian actors to deliver life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable in the country has been challenging owing to unintended effects of the sanctions regimes, and funding remained critically low.

30. In the Philippines, violence displaced more than 360,000 people in Marawi City and a further 19,100 people across Mindanao.

B. Disasters associated with natural hazards

31. In the Southern African region, the effects of the 2015/16 El Niño episode persisted into 2017. An estimated 32 million people were food insecure between June 2016 and March 2017. Cyclones and floods destroyed lives and livelihoods and damaged infrastructure and property in the region. Flooding exacerbated poor water and sanitation conditions leading to cholera outbreaks in several countries and an unprecedented outbreak of plague in Madagascar.

32. In the Horn of Africa, humanitarian needs remained high in Ethiopia, with 8.5 million severely food-insecure people and 1.7 million internally displaced people at the end of the year. Severe drought affected parts of Kenya, with some 5.6 million people needing humanitarian assistance. Drought undermined livelihoods and coping capacity.

33. In Asia and the Pacific, typhoons, tropical cyclones and storms and severe flooding affected Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, affecting millions. Severe flooding in Bangladesh, India and Nepal affected an estimated 40 million people at the height of the crisis, and 1.75 million people were temporarily displaced. In the Philippines, Tropical Storm Kai-Tak temporarily displaced 790,000 people and Tropical Storm Tembin displaced 435,000 people. In Vanuatu, Tropical Cyclone Donna affected three provinces, and the volcanic activity of Monaro Voui led to the evacuation of Ambae Island.

34. Increases in rainfall led to severe flooding in Peru, affecting 1.1 million people. Earthquakes in Mexico affected some 800,000 people and killed some 450. In Colombia, a mudslide in the municipality of Mocoa killed 332 people and left more than 22,000 in need.

35. In September, three category 5 hurricanes swept through the Caribbean, devastating the lives of millions of people and leaving hundreds of thousands displaced. Humanitarian partners launched a regional response plan for $27.1 million for 265,000 people. Under a plan of action for Cuba, $55.8 million was sought for some 2.15 million people. A Hurricane Maria flash appeal for Dominica was launched to raise $32 million to help some 65,000 people. The Central Emergency Response Fund allocated $11 million to jump-start relief efforts across the Caribbean. Early warning and early action saved lives, ensuring access to essential services. In Cuba, robust preparedness measures enabled 1.9 million people to evacuate the island. In Barbuda, the entire population of about 1,600 people was evacuated. Those measures were possible thanks to effective national, regional and international disaster coordination structures.

36. The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency deployed more than 90 experts to undertake search-and-rescue operations, damage and needs analyses and relief operations and proactively sought international support to meet critical needs. United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination and surge teams, which were pre-positioned in the region, boosted coordination, civil-military coordination and information management efforts.

37. The largest United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination mission carried out during the year was in response to Hurricane Irma. Demonstrating its invaluable role in sudden-onset emergencies, United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination response teams have responded to more than 281 emergencies in over 100 countries since its inception 25 years ago. The teams were deployed rapidly to 13 disaster response missions, in addition to carrying out activities aimed at improving national and regional preparedness.

38. Further details on humanitarian responses to natural disasters will be addressed in the report of the Secretary-General to be submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/132.

III. Key themes in 2017

A. Upholding norms

Respect for international humanitarian and human rights law

39. Lack of respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law remains one of the most pressing challenges. In too many armed conflicts, parties continue to flout the fundamental rules of international humanitarian law: distinction, proportionality and precaution. Targeted or indiscriminate attacks are killing and injuring large numbers of civilians and damaging essential civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and schools, and deepening humanitarian crises marked by immense suffering, massive displacement and hunger. The lack of accountability for serious violations has generated a climate of impunity that encourages disrespect for the law.

40. It is imperative that concerted global efforts be made to enhance civilian protection in armed conflict. In the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2017/414), a global protection crisis requiring Member States and other stakeholders to join a global effort commensurate with the scale of the crisis was described. The development of national protection frameworks, the implementation of good practices and the strengthening of accountability mechanisms all contribute to enhancing protection. Practical ways of addressing the behaviour of combatants in conflict and ending impunity must continue to be sought.

Humanitarian access

41. Allowing safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian relief for civilians in need is an obligation under international humanitarian law and a fundamental prerequisite for effective humanitarian action. The failure of parties to conflict to uphold their obligation to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded access deprived people of survival essentials. The arbitrary withholding of consent, bureaucratic impediments, restriction of movement, interference, border closures and violence against humanitarian personnel and assets continue to be reported. The politicization of humanitarian access in several contexts also adversely affects efforts to protect and assist those in need.

Protecting humanitarian workers

42. Reports of humanitarian workers being attacked, harassed, intimidated or arbitrarily detained have become common. As front-line responders, national actors continue to be those most exposed to violence and account for 90 per cent of the humanitarian staff killed in 2017.

43. Enhancing the safety of humanitarian workers is achieved by building the acceptance by parties to conflict of humanitarian organizations; prioritizing the duty of care for humanitarian personnel, with particular attention to national staff, volunteers and partners; ensuring flexible funding to enable partners to adapt activities as required by circumstances; factoring partners' security needs into proposals and budgets; and taking concrete measures to protect humanitarian action from political interference.

Protecting medical care in conflict

44. The World Health Organization reported 322 attacks on health-care facilities in 20 countries during the reporting period. Beyond the destruction of medical facilities, which has devastating long-term effects on entire communities, and the killing and maiming of patients and medical personnel, access to medical care in armed conflict is hampered by legal and other threats, including the looting of medical supplies and denial of access for aid convoys.

45. Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 2286 (2016), some parties to armed conflict have established mechanisms for regular engagement with the national medical sector and non-governmental organizations to share information and discuss deconfliction arrangements. In October, 13 Member States adopted a political declaration expressing support for the recommendations prepared in response to the resolution.

Impact of urban warfare

46. War has increasingly been fought in urban areas, affecting an estimated 50 million people in cities and towns worldwide. Urban warfare is particularly devastating for civilians when it involves the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects and leaves behind explosive remnants of war. Civilian harm can be significantly reduced by avoiding the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas and adopting strong policies and practices.

Adverse consequences of counter-terrorism measures

47. Counter-terrorism measures continue to have an adverse impact on humanitarian action, ranging from lengthy administrative processes or funding drops to legislation that criminalizes activities necessary to provide impartial medical care or conduct principled humanitarian relief operations. Such legislation can contradict international obligations and undermine the very idea of impartial medical care or principled humanitarian action. Complex regulatory norms, coupled with heavy penalties and reputational risks, continue to generate reluctance in the financial sector to provide services for humanitarian operations in countries where groups appearing on terrorist lists are based.

B. Centrality of protection

Protection in humanitarian response

48. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) provided multifaceted tools to better reflect humanitarian protection across operations and support collective analysis and response. The Global Protection Cluster launched a Protection Mainstreaming Toolkit that assists humanitarian actors in incorporating protection into their operations, while the protection information management initiative provides practical guidance to strengthen information-sharing and analysis. Support from Protection Standby Capacity and Gender Standby Capacity projects was provided to more than 20 field locations. Humanitarian country teams continued to develop protection strategies, however, the limits of humanitarian response in the face of ongoing violations and abuses by parties to conflict remained stark in many contexts. While humanitarian actors play an important protection role, they cannot replace Member States and parties to conflict as the primary duty bearers.

Child protection

49. The protection of children is a critical part of humanitarian assistance and protection efforts. Child protection strategies include working with communities to identify the risk scenarios for girls and boys with a view to reinforcing community-based protection strategies; working with armed groups to ensure compliance with international law; carrying out programmes focused on reuniting children with families; and investing in schools and child- and adolescent-friendly environments to uphold the rights of children and reduce the risk of trafficking and exploitation. Scaled-up investments in vital child protection services and local coordination mechanisms are essential.

Sexual and gender-based violence

50. While women and girls continue to be disproportionally affected by sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, sexual slavery and trafficking, men and boys are also vulnerable to such violence, particularly in the context of detention or displacement. Humanitarian organizations stepped up their efforts to address gender-based violence in emergencies. The Global Protection Cluster and experts on gender-based violence worked to better integrate approaches to such violence in humanitarian response plans, and the Global Shelter Cluster piloted tools and guidelines to reduce gender-based violence in shelter-related programming. Nearly 3,000 humanitarian practitioners across 14 sectors and subsectors in 23 countries were trained by the gender-based violence guidelines implementation support team on risk mitigation. Furthermore, the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies, a multi-stakeholder initiative, continues to bring attention and mobilize action.

Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse

51. An update was provided in the recent report of the Secretary-General on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (A/72/751 and Corr.1) on the implementation of a new strategic approach, driven by the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The Victims' Rights Advocate was appointed to prioritize the rights and dignity of victims and improve transparency.

52. IASC is complementing the work of the system-wide working group on sexual exploitation and abuse and the Office of the Special Coordinator by delivering training, supporting action plans and providing operational guidance to relevant networks and humanitarian country teams. The IASC Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse is providing technical support to country teams, and prevention and response are being scaled up in high-risk countries, including through the provision of child-sensitive assistance to victims of exploitation and abuse. Yet more efforts are needed to prevent exploitation and abuse, support survivors and hold perpetrators to account. The United Nations has a responsibility to set and carry out a global standard for preventing, responding to and eradicating this scourge and addressing its impact effectively, humanely and justly.

C. Reducing displacement

Forced displacement

53. Internally displaced people constitute the overwhelming majority of those forcibly displaced. They are among the most vulnerable members of any society. The General Assembly, in its resolution 72/182, underlined the urgent need to strengthen the protection of and assistance to internally displaced people and to prevent and reduce such displacement; called upon Member States and the United Nations system to explore ways to better address the long-term needs of internally displaced persons and to support host communities, including through increased humanitarian and development collaboration towards achieving durable solutions; and encouraged stakeholders to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, in 2018, to strengthen collaboration and address the challenges of internal displacement.

54. Efforts by IASC are aimed at strengthening the response to internal displacement. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees finalized an internal review to ensure a more effective response and is taking forward its recommendations. The International Organization for Migration adopted a Framework for Addressing Internal Displacement to ensure a comprehensive and collaborative approach and enhance operational effectiveness. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs encouraged concerned Governments, humanitarian and development partners and donors to work together more closely to reduce vulnerabilities and foster durable solutions for internally displaced persons and host communities in protracted situations. It also presented practical recommendations and invited concerned Governments and their partners to define collective outcomes, to integrate the needs of internally displaced persons into national policies and development plans, to strengthen humanitarian-development linkages and to ensure multi-year financing.[6] By the end of 2017, work was ongoing in several countries to take those recommendations forward.

55. The first full year for the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework, the new, globally agreed approach to addressing large movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations, was 2017. By the end of the year, the framework had been applied in 13 countries and in 2 regional contexts. With a focus on the resilience of refugees and host communities, the framework has helped to strengthen closer and more complementary cooperation between humanitarian and development actors and financial institutions, including the World Bank. Meanwhile, several States have taken significant action to adopt more inclusive laws or policies, for example in the areas of education, health care, livelihoods and civil documentation.

56. In the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (see General Assembly resolution 71/1), Member States committed themselves to adopting a global compact on refugees by the end of 2018, building on the practical application of the comprehensive refugee response framework and a series of discussions with Member States.

[6] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Breaking the Impasse: Reducing Protracted Internal Displacement as a Collective Outcome*.

Migrants in vulnerable situations

57. Some 5,375 migrants died along migratory routes worldwide in 2017. Too often migrants caught in humanitarian crises face overwhelming risks, including loss of life, physical and sexual violence, exploitation, trafficking, abduction, extortion and lack of access to services. Xenophobic political narratives about migration are widespread today. The global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration offers an opportunity to reinforce needed action.

58. Meeting the needs of migrants in humanitarian crises requires tailored humanitarian and protection assistance. Humanitarian partners sought to improve the ability of national and local authorities and international and regional organizations to address the needs of migrants before, during and after emergencies, including through the roll-out of the guidelines of the Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative.

D. Advancing humanitarian and development collaboration

59. The multidimensional and complex nature of major crises point to the necessity for closer humanitarian and development collaboration. Such collaboration helps to bridge the gap between emergency relief and development aid and enables a shift from meeting immediate humanitarian needs to reducing the risks, vulnerability and needs of the populations affected. Stronger and more effective humanitarian and development collaboration will contribute to prevention, resilience and capacity-building and to sustaining peace, in line with the ongoing reforms of the United Nations. In this regard, momentum towards operationalizing the new way of working across humanitarian and development activities, with a focus on improving collective outcomes at the country level, is critical. It is important that humanitarian assistance be provided in a way that contributes to better development outcomes, whereas development action must focus more on reducing risk and vulnerability.

60. To enhance collaboration, the Secretary-General created a Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Cooperation. Chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, the Committee brings together high-level representatives of United Nations entities and departments, as well as the World Bank, to resolve operational, institutional and systemic barriers and provide strategic advice, support and solutions to, among others, resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators.

61. Advancing humanitarian and development collaboration in the delivery of collective outcomes over multiple years is a task that goes beyond the United Nations, requiring the participation of diverse actors, including Governments, civil society, the private sector and international financial institutions.

62. Operationally, partners in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Mauritania and Somalia are already developing innovative and context-specific models for strengthening humanitarian and development collaboration towards collective outcomes. Lessons learned and best practices from the field are being brought to the attention of the Joint Steering Committee and will inform future context-specific and people-centred humanitarian and development activities.

63. Ultimately, however, no progress will be made unless planning and programming are designed and sustainably financed not only to meet immediate humanitarian needs, but also with a view to investing in long-term solutions for inclusive and sustainable development. Therefore, advocacy with bilateral donors and

international financial institutions to invest in joint risk analysis, joint planning and programming towards collective outcomes is a priority.

E. Famine and severe food insecurity

Prevention of and response to famine

64. Following the Secretary-General's urgent call to action in February 2017 to respond to famine in parts of Unity State, South Sudan, and to the risk of famine across north-eastern Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, the United Nations prioritized its response and appealed for $4.9 billion. Some 20 million people, including 1.4 million severely malnourished children, were at risk of famine. The United Nations, its partners and donors quickly released funds and scaled up life-saving operations in all four countries. The Secretary-General also launched a working group on the prevention of famine, comprising high-level representatives of relevant United Nations agencies.

65. The Central Emergency Response Fund and country-based pooled funds released $379 million in coordinated allocations to scale up humanitarian action in those four countries in the first half of 2017. The World Bank provided $1.8 billion through a famine response initiative aimed at building social protection systems, strengthening resilience and maintaining service delivery.

66. By August, the United Nations and its partners were providing food assistance to nearly 13 million people a month in the four countries. Moreover, nutrition assistance reached more than 2.5 million women and children in July. During the year, 11.9 million people were provided with safe water, 6.7 million children were vaccinated against measles and more than 9 million people received agricultural livelihood support.

67. The rapid integrated response meant that the spread of famine was averted in 2017, but humanitarian needs remain alarmingly high, in some cases higher than when the call to action was launched. Protracted conflict continues to be the principal driver of such crises. Humanitarian access is severely restricted in all four countries, and the operating environments are daunting for civilians and aid workers alike. Based on the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, which is a framework for analysing food insecurity, greater action is urgently needed to address the growing number of people in phases 3 (crisis) and 4 (emergency), not only in those four countries, but also in other countries facing severe food insecurity and undernutrition.

Severe food insecurity

68. While climatic conditions have fostered food insecurity, conflict is also a key factor contributing to the rise in hunger. Civilians caught in conflict often have no access to food and basic services, and markets are often disrupted, limiting their ability to support livelihood or commercial activities. Furthermore, parties to conflict have deliberately exacerbated hunger by violating rules under international humanitarian law that are designed to protect food sources and access to them, including by using starvation as a method of war and impeding relief operations.

69. In addition, drought and the residual effects of the El Niño/La Niña phenomenon, exacerbated by climate change, contribute to water scarcity, loss of land and loss of livelihoods, markets and community economies. The rise in acute hunger globally reflects a continued underinvestment in agriculture and livelihoods. Investing in risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection systems, protecting

livelihoods and providing emergency agriculture support are crucial in saving lives. Development actors need to play a critical role in early and concerted efforts to reinforce resilience before humanitarian crises occur and to engage earlier, be more risk-tolerant and implement more flexible and context-adaptable programming in crisis contexts.

IV. Developments in operations and coordination in 2017

A. Improving humanitarian coordination and response

Coordinated needs assessments and joint analysis

70. The increased use of coordinated multisectoral needs assessments, strategic approaches to data collection and analysis, and joint intersectoral analysis are laying the foundation for a more coherent and efficient response. The increased use of interoperable data is supporting further innovation and collaboration. Inter-agency humanitarian evaluations continue to enhance the accountability and transparency of humanitarian action.

Cash-based transfers

71. Cash-based transfers, including multipurpose or unrestricted cash used as a modality for delivering assistance, can provide people in emergencies with a flexible and dignified way to make choices on the goods and services they need most. As cash-based initiatives can generate a broad range of positive social and economic benefits, several agencies have scaled up the use of cashed-based assistance. The Global Cluster coordinators' group task team on cash is developing guidance on improving the coordination of cash assistance, including the use of multipurpose cash across clusters. Donors and humanitarian organizations should continue their efforts to scale up cash-based programming where contextually appropriate.

Social protection programming

72. Risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection systems can serve both short- and long-term objectives by serving as a scalable mechanism for emergency aid delivery and by building resilience. United Nations agencies and the World Bank worked with Governments and partners to improve the shock responsiveness of social protection systems. Humanitarian responses should make use of relevant social protection systems wherever appropriate and feasible and work to build their capacity.

B. Disaster risk reduction and preparedness

73. A shift from managing crises to managing risk is critical. Measures were taken during the year to improve overall preparedness for disasters. The Capacity for Disaster Risk Reduction Initiative delivered capacity-development services in seven countries. The Global Preparedness Partnership was also operationalized, with the first round of applications opened for strengthening preparedness capacities in 15 countries. A multi-partner trust fund was established to support this work. By early 2018, the IASC emergency response preparedness approach, which aims to increase the delivery of life-saving assistance in the first six weeks of an emergency, was being implemented in 70 countries.

74. The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, at its fifth session, held in Cancun, Mexico, from 24 to 26 May, made important progress, including identifying elements to enhance risk-informed disaster preparedness and recovery plans and highlighting the importance of integrating provisions for reducing displacement risk, addressing the protection needs of displaced people and promoting durable solutions in disaster risk reduction strategies. In addition, IASC worked on standard operating procedures to catalyse early warning and action for extreme weather events related to the El Niño Southern Oscillation, building on the "blueprint for action" prepared by the Special Envoys of the Secretary-General on El Niño and Climate.

75. The year 2017 marked 10 years since the adoption of the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance, which help Governments to prepare for common legal problems in international response operations. Thirty countries have adopted legal instruments to better prepare for international response operations, with the support of national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

Regional organizations and the private sector

76. The United Nations worked with regional organizations to improve, prepare for and respond to crises, including by entering into a partnership with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency and Management Agency to streamline response operations in the Caribbean and by working with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on disaster management and with the African Union in support of field missions.

77. The Global Crisis Centre Network, established as a community of practice for national and regional crisis centres, supports the exchange and analysis of information among international actors after sudden-onset disasters. The Network developed draft standard operating procedures in 2017.

78. The Connecting Business Initiative has supported 13 business networks in disaster-prone countries in promoting preparedness, response and early recovery. Eight networks responded to disasters during the year. The United Nations Global Compact launched the Business for Humanitarian Action platform to better support humanitarian action.

C. Data

79. Efforts continued during the year to improve access to reliable, timely data through continuous monitoring of needs and response, which is critical for evidence-based humanitarian action. The Secretary-General launched the Centre for Humanitarian Data in The Hague, the Netherlands, in December to increase the impact of data and its use to inform evidence-based humanitarian action. The Index for Risk Management initiative continued to support countries and organizations in the development of shared open-source risk analysis.

D. Localization

Capacity-building of, coordination with and financing of local and national organizations

80. Reinforcing, rather than replacing, local response efforts and capacity is important. National and local actors are often the first to respond to a crisis and they remain in the communities they serve. The World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 23 and 24 May 2016, energized a dialogue on localization and led to more than 1,000 commitments and numerous initiatives. The Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing, the Charter for Change and other initiatives set targets that mobilized the humanitarian community around localization. International organizations and donors are providing more funding directly or through pooled funds to local partners and are investing in their capacity. Some donors are providing capacity-building or core funding to local and national actors, some international non-governmental organizations are sharing core costs with partners and more collaborative partnership approaches are being implemented. These funding and partnership models need to be applied and scaled up more systematically.

Emergencies in urban areas

81. It is projected that by 2030 there will be 870 million more urban residents. Intensified efforts to address the needs of urban residents affected by crisis are needed, including through the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Opportunities for engagement will be identified and local solutions developed jointly with local communities and authorities to increase the sustainability of interventions and improve aid delivery through the use of existing service delivery mechanisms. The City Resilience Profiling Tool of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme is a tool for self-assessment that helps local governments and stakeholders to improve cities' capacity to absorb and rebound quickly to shocks or stresses. The Clobal Alliance for Urban Crises connects more than 65 humanitarian and development organizations, networks of municipal authorities and professional institutes to better address risks in urban contexts, including by developing shared assessment and profiling tools.

E. Empowering and protecting women and girls

Gender equality and women's empowerment

82. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by crises. Thus, addressing the differing needs, priorities and capacities of women, girls, boys and men and promoting gender equality is critical in humanitarian action. The IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, revised in December, will strengthen humanitarian efforts on the ground. The IASC Gender Standby Capacity has been providing strategic and technical advice on gender mainstreaming and gender equality programming support to humanitarian country teams. Shifting from policy to practice requires more predictable funding for programmes that target women and girls, the systematic use of data disaggregated by sex and age and gender analysis. Recent advances in normative frameworks must also be matched by strong practical implementation and improved accountability.

Sexual and reproductive health

83. Over 60 per cent of maternal deaths and 45 per cent of newborn deaths worldwide occurred in fragile countries and countries affected by humanitarian crises. As a priority response within the first 48 hours of the onset of an emergency, the Minimum Initial Service Package provides a set of life-saving interventions, focusing on preventing maternal mortality and morbidity and planning for comprehensive reproductive health services when the situation permits. Recognizing the importance of sexual and reproductive health services in emergency settings, 39 countries have made the service package part of their national humanitarian preparedness and response plans. It is important that sexual and reproductive health services be prioritized and adequately funded in emergency settings.

F. Accountability and inclusion

Accountability to affected people

84. People in crisis are the central actors in building their own resilience. During the year, IASC principals endorsed the revised commitments on accountability to affected populations with a view to enforcing, institutionalizing and integrating accountability commitments so as to develop relevant systems at the country level. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs worked with partners to increase the percentage of humanitarian needs overviews and humanitarian response plans that include coordinated accountability mechanisms.

Advancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities

85. The Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action gained momentum and has been endorsed by more than 180 stakeholders, including 24 countries. Guidelines are being developed by IASC to assist humanitarian actors, Governments and affected communities in the full and effective participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities, including children. Finalizing and implementing the guidelines, improving data collection and monitoring tools and strengthening the capacity of organizations for disabled persons will be important.

Advancing the role of youth

86. Advancing the role of youth in humanitarian action is important, as young people can be strong drivers of resilience and agents of change. The Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, with 53 members, is a global call to safeguard the rights of young people affected by humanitarian crises and to engage them in response efforts. Work is under way to develop inter-agency guidelines for programming with and for youth in humanitarian settings. Furthermore partners, including regional and national disaster coordinating bodies, worked with youth to build and utilize their emergency response skills.

Ensuring education for all in crises

87. The goal of providing education in emergencies benefited from strong advocacy and coordination across core partnerships, including the IASC Education Cluster, the Global Partnership for Education and the Education Cannot Wait initiative. Endorsed by more than 70 countries, the Safe Schools Declaration reflects an important political commitment to reduce the impact of conflict on education. From 2007 to 2016, only 4.6 per cent of emergency appeal requests were allocated to education. To reach the

263 million children and youth who remain out of school in humanitarian settings, higher levels of funding are needed at an early stage of a crisis.

G. Humanitarian financing

Optimizing existing financing tools

88. The Central Emergency Response Fund is a critical enabler of immediate, effective and coordinated humanitarian action. In 2017, the Fund allocated $275 million in rapid response grants and $145 million in underfunded emergency grants to 36 countries, ensuring indispensable life-saving support. Donors contributed the highest-ever level of annual funding, with $514 million in voluntary contributions. Recognizing the Fund's essential role, the General Assembly endorsed its expansion to $1 billion (resolution 71/127). This will bolster global unearmarked contingency financing for shocks and underfunded crises and enable the Fund to continue meeting its life-saving mandate.

89. Country-based pooled funds were channelled to more than 640 humanitarian organizations for 18 of the world's most dire humanitarian crises. In 2017, a record amount of $824 million was provided by donors. Some 24 per cent of the funds, a 6 per cent increase from 2016, was allocated directly to local and national responders. Given their effectiveness, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and donors aim to increase the size of country-based pooled funds to 15 per cent of the funding requirements of the country humanitarian response plans. The Central Emergency Response Fund and country-based pooled funds also strengthened their complementarity so as to leverage comparative advantages and maximize impact.

Innovative financing

90. The need to move beyond an appeal-based funding approach towards a financing strategy that would include a wider group of financing actors (i.e. United Nations entities, bilateral donors, multilateral development banks and private sector entities) was recognized. The initial resources invested in humanitarian crises have a longer-term impact on development when strategically leveraged with additional financing mechanisms and aligned with collective outcomes. This includes more risk-informed development financing, the eighteenth replenishment of International Development Association disbursements and financing for prevention.

91. Several innovative humanitarian financing mechanisms are being used to quickly mobilize financing and ensure a rapid response. Forecast-based financing has been used by the World Food Programme, IFRC and other partners to promote early action. IFRC established a forecast-based financing window of the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund to enable access to funding for early action. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations used early warning information and a new flexible funding mechanism to prompt early action in the Horn of Africa to ease the impact of drought on pastoralists and provide vulnerable families with livestock feed, water and veterinary treatment. Others, such as African Risk Capacity, are investing in weather-related risk insurance.

H. Health emergencies

92. IASC, building on lessons learned from previous health emergencies, adopted system-wide activation procedures for infectious diseases and tested the new protocol in a simulation in December.

93. Cholera and acute watery diarrhoea affected multiple countries. In response to an unprecedented cholera outbreak in Yemen, humanitarian partners built 234 diarrhoea treatment centres and 1,084 oral rehydration corners and disseminated cholera prevention messages to more than 17 million people. Humanitarian partners also responded to outbreaks of yellow fever in parts of South America, Asia and Africa, Ebola virus in Central Africa, Lassa fever in West Africa, Marburg virus in the Horn of Africa, monkeypox in Central and West Africa and the plague in Madagascar. Diphtheria resurfaced in multiple countries, and the lack of global stocks of antitoxin is of concern. In Ukraine, low immunization rates and the expansion of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis and HIV epidemics are of concern.

I. Strengthening human resources capacity

94. The system-wide strategy of the Secretary-General on gender parity has the goal of not only reaching targets, but also of creating a working environment that embraces quality, eradicates bias and is inclusive of all staff. The implementation of the gender parity strategy is also expected to further geographic diversity. The twin goals of parity and diversity are mutually reinforcing. As part of the Secretariat, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is committed to attracting and retaining diverse talent in a workplace that embraces equality and diversity and complies with United Nations regulations and policies. Under its new "people strategy", developed in 2017, the Office will set and monitor gender parity and geographic diversity targets and engage in outreach to ensure greater diversity among the pool of applicants, including national staff.

95. Various humanitarian agencies of the United Nations system also made strides in this area during the year. The International Organization for Migration is developing a diversity and inclusion workplan and is undertaking training, leadership and mentoring programmes to support diversity and inclusion. The United Nations Children's Fund is reinforcing its efforts to achieve gender and geographic balance in appointments at all levels. The World Food Programme is undertaking a gender analysis to identify underrepresented areas and obstacles in attracting female staff.

J. Improving coordination with volunteering organizations

96. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/105, an update is hereby provided on collaboration between the White Helmets, an initiative of the Government of Argentina, and the United Nations. Since 1994, more than 700 White Helmets volunteers have provided assistance in 71 countries and undertaken 291 international humanitarian missions, many in coordination with the United Nations, and strengthened links with United Nations system agencies through agreements, joint workplans, financial support and field missions. Highlights included response and reconstruction work following hurricanes, floods and earthquakes in Latin America and the Caribbean and missions focused on building resilience in drought-affected areas.

V. Recommendations

97. On the basis of the foregoing, the Secretary-General recommends the following:

(a) Member States, non-State armed groups and humanitarian organizations should intensify their efforts to promote and ensure full respect for and adherence to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence;

(b) The United Nations, its Member States and all parties to armed conflict should urgently take all measures necessary to promote and ensure respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, ensure the protection of civilians and ensure accountability for perpetrators of serious violations, at the national or international level, as appropriate, including by bringing to justice perpetrators of violations and abuses perpetrated against children;

(c) Member States and non-State armed groups should allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded access of impartial humanitarian relief workers, expedite procedures for the entry and deployment of humanitarian personnel, goods and services and ensure that such procedures are clear and simple;

(d) Member States and non-State armed groups should respect and protect humanitarian workers and assets, including by refraining from directing attacks against them and taking constant care to spare them from the effects of military operations, and Member States should take all measures necessary to ensure that their domestic laws guarantee respect for and protection of humanitarian workers and assets;

(e) Member States and parties to conflict should adopt and implement practical measures to protect humanitarian and medical missions, such as those defined in the recommendations made pursuant to Security Council resolution 2286 (2016), and share best practices and lessons learned;

(f) Member States and non-State armed groups should respect the civilian character of schools and other educational institutions and refrain from undertaking actions that could adversely affect the protection of education facilities against direct attacks and should strongly condemn all attacks and threats of attack against schools perpetrated in contravention of international humanitarian law;

(g) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should continue to place protection at the centre of humanitarian action, maximize protection outcomes and promote safety and dignity in humanitarian response;

(h) The United Nations and humanitarian organizations must fully implement the United Nations policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse and ensure that victims have adequate protection, appropriate assistance and reliable recourse to justice, and Member States and the United Nations should ensure that perpetrators are held accountable;

(i) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should increase their investments and efforts to ensure that sexual and gender-based violence prevention services are in place from the onset of an emergency and that survivors have immediate access to those critical services and tools to

assist them in their recovery, and should systematically integrate prevention, risk mitigation and response in humanitarian response plans and strengthen data collection and monitoring systems;

(j) Member States should ensure that counter-terrorism measures do not impede principled humanitarian action, for example through general, standing humanitarian exemptions in sanctions regimes and national legislation;

(k) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian and development organizations should prevent and measurably reduce internal displacement in a safe and dignified manner, develop and implement effective strategies to ensure comprehensive protection and assistance for the displaced, support the early self-sufficiency of internally displaced people, work towards durable solutions, improve data collection and analysis and raise awareness of the situation of displaced people, particularly in view of the twentieth anniversary, in 2018, of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement;

(l) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should recognize local capacities and remove barriers that hinder collaboration among international, national, local and regional actors with a view to reinforcing and not replacing the capacities of local actors and institutions;

(m) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should promote and fund community engagement approaches in order that communities may receive timely information and have access to complaint and feedback mechanisms;

(n) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should provide the human and financial resources necessary to deliver programmes responsive to the different and context-specific needs of affected people, including by ensuring the systematic collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by sex, age and disability and by according priority to funding in the areas of gender equality, women's empowerment and the use of the IASC gender with age marker;

(o) Member States, the United Nations, humanitarian and development organizations and other relevant actors should intensify their efforts to respond to and prevent rising global food insecurity, especially for countries at risk of famine, including by enhancing humanitarian-development cooperation, investing in agriculture to protect livelihoods and food production, providing urgent and flexible funding, working to achieve collective outcomes for food security and nutrition and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law;

(p) Member States, the United Nations, humanitarian and development organizations and other relevant actors should ensure financing geared towards achieving collective outcomes and supporting humanitarian and development collaboration through joint analysis, joint planning and increased multi-year humanitarian financing;

(q) Member States and other relevant actors should fully fund humanitarian response plans and appeals, increase contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund with a view to reaching an annual funding level of $1 billion, including through new and additional funding sources, and increase contributions to humanitarian country-based pooled funds;

(r) Member States and humanitarian organizations should take forward commitments made and initiatives launched at the World Humanitarian Summit and voluntarily report on progress and best practices through the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation.